

I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS) and Ranking Member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs for introducing this Concurrent Resolution.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H. Con. Res. 235.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the legislation introduced by my good friend from Illinois, LANE EVANS.

I have worked for years with the distinguished Ranking Member on the Veterans Committee and am sorry to see him leave this fine institution. I have been blessed to have known him and this Congress will be diminished without him.

However, I am here to speak on legislation to improve driver awareness when driving around visually impaired persons.

There are 1.5 million visually impaired Americans.

The bill requests that every State in the country include information in the driver education material and driver license application manuals. Such information would instruct drivers of motor vehicles to approach persons with white canes or guide dogs with recognition that such individuals are blind and that extra caution should be exercised.

It is common sense legislation that will help save a life.

This legislation was passed by the House of Representatives in the 108th Congress, but could not come to an agreement with the Senate before the end of the session. I hope we can agree to this legislation and pass it before the end of this Congress.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 235, a resolution that would require candidates for driver's licenses to demonstrate an ability to exercise heightened caution when driving in the proximity of a potentially visually impaired person. It would also require these candidates to be able to relate the use of the white cane and guide dog with visually impaired individuals.

Each year, dozens of visually impaired persons are involved in car collisions. For example, a blind person may be crossing a street intersection and be hit by a reckless driver. There is simply no reason for a driver to strike a visually impaired pedestrian. H. Con. Res. 235 will help to reduce the likelihood of this happening in the future by educating drivers about visually impaired persons. This resolution will therefore help to safeguard visually impaired individuals and make our streets safer.

I strongly support H. Con. Res. 235, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. PETRI) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 235.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RAILROAD RETIREMENT TECHNICAL IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2006

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5074) to amend the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974 to provide for continued payment of railroad retirement annuities by the Department of the Treasury, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5074

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Railroad Retirement Technical Improvement Act of 2006".

SEC. 2. DISBURSEMENT AGENT.

Section 7(b)(4) of the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974 (45 U.S.C. 231f(b)(4)) is amended so that subparagraph (A) reads as follows:

"(A) The Secretary of the Treasury shall serve as the disbursing agent for benefits payable under this Act, under such rules and regulations as the Secretary may in the Secretary's discretion prescribe."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on H.R. 5074.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this bipartisan legislation. In 2001, after several years of intense labor management negotiations, the most comprehensive reform of the railroad retirement system in nearly 2 decades was enacted. The ERISA-type investment trust in which Tier II pension assets are invested has been performing extremely well. Payroll tax rates have gone down for both the railroads and workers, benefits have increased and the investment trust has experienced a nearly 50 percent growth in asset value in those 5 short years.

At the time of the 2001 legislation, we included a retirement that Tier II pension benefit checks be issued through a private contractor. This rested on the belief, since proven wrong, that this would be more efficient than continuing the use of the Treasury for this purpose.

In fact, the Railroad Retirement Board, the trustees of the investment trust and the Congressional Budget Office have all found that by using an outside disbursing agent, actually costs to the program are increased by

\$2 million a year more than they would have been if we had used the Treasury.

As a temporary expedient, the mandate to use an outside disbursing agent has been legislatively postponed in appropriations measures since 2001, but is it is obviously time to make the correction permanent. H.R. 5074 does this by amending the permanent Railroad Retirement Act to designate the U.S. Treasury as the disbursing agent for the benefits.

This legislation has been fully bipartisan from the outside. I particularly want to commend the chairman of the full committee, Mr. YOUNG, the ranking member of the full committee, Mr. OBERSTAR, and my ranking member on the subcommittee, Ms. BROWN, for their leader in moving this bill forward expeditiously. It means greater efficiency for a system that is critical to the well-being of the Nation's retired railroad workers and deserves the endorsement of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my chairman for his strong leadership on the committee. I am proud that our Railroad Subcommittee has been dedicated to protecting and improving the retirement benefit the hard-working employees who are part of the railroad retirement system. Too often we look at an industry and we forget about the devoted men and women who are working very hard every day to serve their customers.

This legislation teaches us a very valuable lesson, particularly as we begin to debate legislation sunseting Federal agencies. We learn that sometimes government can do better and cheaper than the private sector can. I want to repeat that. Sometimes government can do better and cheaper than the private sector can.

In 2001, the Railroad Retirement and Survivors Improvement Act made several changes to the railroad benefit system, including requiring the Railroad Retirement Board to contract with a private firm for distributing Tier II benefits. However, the Railroad Retirement Board quickly learned that an outside company would cost \$3 million more than using the U.S. Treasury Department.

Since the 2001 legislation was enacted, the Appropriations Committee has provided a waiver for this requirement, but this bill would permanently make the U.S. Treasury Department the distribution agent for Tier II railroad retirement benefits and end the need for this yearly benefit.

This plan was proposed by the Railroad Retirement Board and the Railroad Retirement Investment Trustees and is supported by both railroad management and labor. I urge my colleagues to support speedy passage of this legislation.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5074, the Railroad Retirement Technical Improvement Act of 2006. This legislation, requested by the Railroad Retirement Board (Board), amends the Railroad Retirement Act to provide for continued payment of railroad retirement annuities by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Although the Railroad Retirement Board could use a private, nongovernmental disbursing agent for payment of railroad retirements benefits, as outlined in the Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 2001, the Board has determined that utilizing a private disbursing agent would cost considerably more than continuing to have the Treasury Department make the payments. The annual cost of paying railroad retirement benefits through the Department of Treasury is about \$800,000. In contrast, initial procurement inquiries have indicated that the first-year costs of paying railroad retirement benefits under contract with a private disbursing agent would be more than \$3 million and, approximately \$2.3 million in each subsequent year.

These substantial costs would be borne by the railroad retirement trust funds, which were established to support the disability, retirement and survivor benefit programs provided for railroad workers and their families under the Railroad Retirement Act. The Board believes that using a nongovernmental disbursing agent would diminish service to its railroad worker beneficiaries.

Finally, the Railroad Retirement Board and the Board's Inspector General believe that using a nongovernmental disbursing agent would make it more difficult to collect incorrect payments and other Federal debts because the agent would not have the considerable debt collection tools of the Treasury Department.

For all of these reasons, the Railroad Retirement Board has sought and received deferrals of the private disbursing agent requirement via annual appropriations acts in prior years.

This legislation amends the underlying statute to authorize the continued use of the Department of the Treasury for such disbursements.

At the time of consideration of the Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act in 2001, I had reservations about the claims that a private disbursing agent would save money. The Board's estimates that the private sector would cost millions of dollars more per year have confirmed my suspicions. In this case, as in many others, despite claims of "the private sector can do it better and cheaper", the facts show that the government is able to do the job most efficiently, effectively, and cheaply. I am pleased that we are able to revisit this issue today.

I strongly support the bill and urge my colleagues to support it.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5074.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof)

the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COMMEMORATING 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF HISTORIC 1946 SEASON OF BASEBALL HALL OF FAME MEMBER BOB FELLER

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 449) commemorating the 60th anniversary of the historic 1946 season of Major League Baseball Hall of Fame member Bob Feller and his return from military service to the United States.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 449

Whereas Robert William Andrew Feller was born on November 3, 1918, near Van Meter, Iowa, and resides in Gates Mills, Ohio;

Whereas Bob Feller enlisted in the Navy 2 days after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941;

Whereas, at the time of his enlistment, Bob Feller was at the peak of his baseball career, as he had been signed to the Cleveland Indians at the age of 16, had struck out 15 batters in his first Major League Baseball start in August 1936, and established a Major League record by striking out 18 Detroit Tigers in a single, 9-inning game;

Whereas Bob Feller is the first pitcher in modern Major League Baseball history to win 20 or more games before the age of 21;

Whereas Bob Feller pitched the only opening day no-hitter in Major League Baseball history;

Whereas, on April 16, 1940, at Comiskey Park in Chicago, Bob Feller threw his first no-hitter and began the season for which he was awarded Major League Baseball Player of the Year;

Whereas Bob Feller served with valor in the Navy for nearly 4 years, missing almost 4 full baseball seasons;

Whereas Bob Feller was stationed mostly aboard the U.S.S. Alabama as a gunnery specialist, where he kept his pitching arm in shape by tossing a ball on the deck of that ship;

Whereas Bob Feller earned 8 battle stars and was discharged in late 1945, and was able to pitch 9 games at the end of that season, compiling a record of 5 wins and 3 losses;

Whereas 60 years ago, amid great speculation that, after nearly 4 seasons away from baseball, his best pitching days were behind him, Bob Feller had 1 of the most amazing seasons in baseball history;

Whereas, in the 1946 season, Bob Feller pitched 36 complete games in 42 starts;

Whereas, on April 30, 1946, in a game against the New York Yankees, Bob Feller pitched his second career no-hitter;

Whereas, in 1946, Bob Feller pitched in relief 6 times, saving 4 games;

Whereas, in 1946, Bob Feller routinely threw between 125 and 140 pitches a game, a feat not often seen today;

Whereas, in 1946, Bob Feller pitched 371½ innings and had 348 strikeouts;

Whereas, in 1946, Bob Feller had an earned run average of 2.18;

Whereas, in 1946, a fastball thrown by Bob Feller was clocked at 109 mph;

Whereas Bob Feller was the winning pitcher in the 1946 All Star Game, throwing 3 scoreless innings in a 12-0 victory by the American League;

Whereas, in 1946, Bob Feller led the American League in wins, shutouts, strikeouts, games pitched, and innings;

Whereas the baseball career of Bob Feller ended in 1956, but not before pitching his third no-hitter against the Detroit Tigers on July 1, 1951, pitching 12 1-hit games, amassing 266 victories and 2,581 strikeouts, and leading the league in strikeouts 7 times;

Whereas Bob Feller was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962; and

Whereas Bob Feller, a beloved baseball figure known as "Bullet Bob" and "Rapid Robert," placed service to his country ahead of playing the game he loved and is a decorated war veteran: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress commemorates the 60th anniversary of the 1946 season of Bob Feller and his return from military service to the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include Dextraneous material on H.Con.Res 449.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. LATOURETTE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I want to, first of all, thank the chairman of the full committee, Mr. DAVIS of Virginia, for moving this legislation forward. This measure recognizes my constituent, Baseball Hall of Famer Bob Feller, for his military service to our country and also commemorates the 60th anniversary of his greatest baseball season.

It is my honor to have introduced this measure, together with a number of our colleagues that you will hear from this afternoon, and it will be our honor to host Bob Feller tomorrow when he visits Capitol Hill on the eve of his trip to Cooperstown for the annual Hall of Fame weekend.

Mr. Speaker, in 1941, Bob Feller was at the peak of his baseball career. The right-hander from Van Meter, Iowa, had signed with my beloved Cleveland Indians at the age of 16 and became an instant sensation. Feller made quick work of rewriting the record books and thrilling fans. In his first major league start, he struck out 15 St. Louis Browns.

In 1938, Feller established a new major league strikeout record by striking out 18 Detroit Tigers in a single nine-inning game. He was the first pitcher in modern major league history to win 20 or more games before the age of 21.

He pitched his first no-hitter on opening day at Comiskey Park against the Chicago White Sox on April 16,